
THE PRESENT TRUTH.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. GEORGE PATTERSON.

THE PRESENT TRUTH.

A. STEWART.

OF THE NEW ENGLAND METHODIST CHURCH.

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A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD

OF THE

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A SERMON.

THE great truths of the gospel are unchanged and unchangeable. This must be the case from the manner in which they have been made known to man. They are not the result of human speculation, and therefore cannot share the fate of such enquiries, where the conclusions of one age are overthrown or are superseded by the more matured investigations of its successor. They are not the result of human discovery, and no subsequent progress of man can render them obsolete, or unfold any other or more advanced system to take their place. On the contrary they come to us by the inspiration of the Most High,—and as no new revelation is promised, we are to expect during all this sublunary state of things no substitute for them.

Hence in every age and under all circumstances the same doctrines are to be proclaimed to men for their salvation and are blessed by God for that end. Christianity as a system of religious instruction is adapted to universal humanity. In its primal truths it reaches man in the lowest Barbarism or the highest civilization. The profoundest philosopher and the most illiterate peasant alike find rest and comfort in the Saviour which it proclaims. And the lapse of time effects no change in its virtue. The same truths which the Apostles proclaimed when the throne of the Cæsars sat firm upon the seven-hilled city, were those by the proclamation of which the Reformers of the 16th century awoke the world from the slumber of ages. By the preaching of the same truths the Missionary brings savage tribes to the obedience of faith, and the ministry at home contends with the materialistic spirit of the present age. And the same truths brought home to the hearts of men by a new Baptism of the spirit will introduce the Millennial glory of the Church.

Yet in another sense each age has its peculiar truths to maintain. The enemy does not assault the citadel at every point at the same time, nor at the same point in every age. And hence the defenders are called upon according to the times in which they live, to defend particular portions of the edifice, and to exhibit more energetically those particular truths, which may be the subject of special assault. In the application too of the great principles of Christianity to the changing phases of human life, moral, so-

cial, and religious, they are ever appearing in new forms and achieving new results.

Besides, too, the truth in its developement is progressive. We do not mean by this, that there are many new truths being discovered, or that any of the old become obsolete. But the principles of God's word are only slowly appreciated, and their full bearing only comprehended in the lapse of ages. And it has commonly happened that each period in the church's history has had some great truth to maintain. The storms of discussion are made the means of its clearer elucidation—circumstances in providence excite attention to it—experience teaches its value and importance, and the peculiar vigor of the assaults of the great adversary upon it endear it to the hearts of the faithful. Principles which may have for a time been dormant in the word of God, or only partially appreciated, become thus established as part of the faith of the church, and are interwoven with its whole experience and practice. Thus one age has had the Arian controversy, in which the doctrines of God's word regarding the person of Christ have been so fully discussed, that, with trifling exceptions, they have since been the undisturbed faith of the church, and another age seemed to have had as its peculiar vocation, the exhibition of the doctrines of sovereign grace in the procuring and bestowing salvation upon the children of men.

While therefore we are to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints" to preach the whole system of divine truth—to "keep back nothing that is profitable," and "not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God," yet if we would not show ourselves "unskilful in the word of righteousness" we must observe what particular portions of the system of divine truth the times and situations in which we are placed require us to hold forth most prominently. If we do not attend to this, though we may preach no positive error, yet our preaching may have the same effect as if we did. To preach morality, when men are trusting to their own doings, would be equivalent to preaching justification by the works of the law. But to insist mainly on justification by faith, when men are already running into Antinomian excesses, would have the same effect as preaching our release from the law as a rule of life. In both cases we would be preaching no error, but we would show that we had not learned "*rightly to divide the word of truth.*" In the one case it would be our duty like Paul to preach that "we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law," and in the other, like James, to proclaim, that "faith without works is dead being alone." The same might be illustrated by other instances. If then we should show ourselves "men of Issachar who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do," we must learn, what are the errors against which we are particularly called to contend in the present day, and what are the truths upon which we are particularly called to insist. Will my fathers and brethren in the ministry then suffer an imperfect attempt to exhibit "the present truth."

In attending to this subject one general remark may be made in the outset, viz.: that a peculiar characteristic of false teachers in the present day, is to assume the language and phrases of orthodoxy. There is no honest assault upon the truth in our times. All the operations of the enemy are carried on by sapping and mining. So that it is now impossible to judge merely by the language employed whether a preacher or writer be orthodox or not. We will have occasion to shew this more abundantly in the sequel. We only remark at present, that it shows the insidious nature of

the opposition we are called to encounter, the dishonesty of which well merits the denunciation of God's word. "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

I. With this general preliminary observation, I would remark, in the first place, that we are especially called in the present day to maintain *the inspiration of the scriptures and the authority of the whole word of God.*

Formerly infidelity attempted to prove the Bible a forgery, and the claim of inspiration for its authors an imposition upon human credulity. Now it has entirely changed its tactics. It now professes not only to believe in inspiration, but to maintain it in its fullest sense. But it is only such an inspiration for the writers of the books of scripture, as is possessed by men of genius in every age. According to the advocates of this system, Paul was inspired but so was Shakespeare—Isaiah was inspired and so was Milton—John the apostle of love was divinely inspired and so was Byron, the apostle of misanthropy. This view is openly advocated by the *Westminster Review*, a publication, conducted with eminent ability and extensively circulated among ourselves. It is the view of a large class of philosophical writers and of the distinguished Litterateurs of the day. It is a favourite idea of the Rationalists of Germany, and, worse than all this, it has lately been openly avowed by clergymen of the Church of England, as Maurice, Jowett and McNaught, if not also by some leading members of the English Dissenters.*

This is not a difference about the theory of inspiration such as there has been among the Orthodox. It is in reality a denial of inspiration altogether. It is degrading the apostles and prophets to the level of mere human teachers, and making their works of no binding authority upon the consciences of men. All that we feel it necessary to do is to point out the dishonesty of this mode of speech. The advocates of this theory know that by the Bible being inspired we mean that it is a supernatural and infallible expression of the will of God, while they mean in using the same language that its various portions are the natural efforts of the human mind. Surely the very statement of this view conveys its own refutation. The inspiration for which they contend is no inspiration at all, and their whole theory is but an attempt to conciliate prejudice by admitting an inspiration in words, which they deny in reality. Far better was the downright ribaldry of Paine himself, than this betrayal of the Son of Man with a kiss.

In connexion with this, we may remark that the Old Testament has been made the special subject of assault, and we are particularly called upon to maintain the divine authority of the whole revelation of God. In former

* That we may not seem to misrepresent the views of such we will give the words of Mr McNaught himself.

"Referring Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Bacon's *Novum organum* to the man who wrote each, we describe each of these books as a book of genius; but the far truer and grander mode of speaking would be to refer the creative power of thinking to him who alone made Milton or Bacon to differ from ordinary writers, and thus to call their books works of the spirit of God written by divine inspiration. This seems to be the Bible's own teaching, viz.: that every thing good in any book, person or thing, is inspired, and that the value of any inspired book must be decided by the extent of its inspiration, and the importance of the truth which it well or inspiringly teaches. Milton, and Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Canticles, and the Apocalypse, and the Sermon on the Mount, and the eighth chapter of Romans are in our view inspired."

times the Old and New Testament have generally stood together. But in the present day we hear the loudest commendations of the New Testament, while the Old is decried as useless or worse. It is not uncommon to hear the loudest praise of the doctrines of Jesus, with the fiercest denunciations of the Theology of Moses, and the morality of the one is represented as entirely at variance with that of the other book in spirit and letter. This error is far more extensive than the last, as it is held by many who hold most of the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity. In particular, the Christian public was not long since shocked by the open avowal on the part of Dr Wayland, a man whose writings on moral science had won him a high reputation, and whose efforts on behalf of the anti-slavery cause, had gained him the esteem of the friends of the oppressed, that he did not regard the Old Testament as any part of the standard of divine truth. Those who have come in contact with the Baptists in this Province must have observed a tendency to the same view, and will not be surprised at the open avowal of it by one of the most eminent men that that body has produced. The same view, however, is maintained by others. It has recently been elaborately defended by Professor Powell of Oxford in a work entitled "Christianity without Judaism," and it seems also to form part of the creed of Dr Davidson, late of the Lancashire Independent College.

This is an old heresy, but it is not the less dangerous. It is impossible to pass from the Old Testament to the New without observing a close connexion between them. Not only do the writers of the New Testament manifest a familiarity with the Old—not only do they evince that their thoughts were cast in the same mould, but they constantly appeal to the Old Testament as of binding authority. The scriptures, the word, the word of God, are the expressions by which they designate the Old Testament. So far from our Saviour and his apostles representing themselves as teaching a religion, different from, or opposed to, what had gone before, they everywhere represent them as identical, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." "All things must be fulfilled which are written in the law, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me."* It is admitted that the Mosaic Dispensation was temporary, while the other is permanent—that the one was preparatory, and imperfect. But it is far from following, that the books of the Old Testament, that contain the record of that dispensation, are now without authority, and only of interest as so much ancient history. The New Testament, on the contrary, recognizes them as having a claim to respect and confidence from all believers. They are declared to be "given by inspiration of God, and able to make wise unto salvation." They are those which our Lord exhorts the Jews to search, and which this writer, one of the latest of the New Testament, pronounces "a sure word of prophecy" to which Christians would "do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place"—that is a revelation of the will of God which they cannot safely or lawfully disregard. With this accords the experience of the church in all ages. The influence of Christianity upon the world has been produced not through the New Testament alone, but by the Bible as a whole, and in proportion to the depth of its spirituality has the church clung to the *whole Scriptures* as the infallible standard of divine truth.

* Matt. v. 17. Luke xxiv. 44.

II. But secondly, I would briefly remark, that we are at the present moment called upon to maintain the doctrine of a *Trinity of persons in the Godhead*, and especially of the *Eternal Sonship of Christ*. We do not say that there is any general revival of Unitarianism throughout the world. On the contrary we think, that in the United States particularly, it is dying out. Some of its advocates are going forward to Deism, as in the case of the celebrated Theodore Parker, while some more earnest spirits are feeling more and more the unsatisfactory nature of the system, and are verging toward the old faith. My allusion is a local one! Hitherto as a church we have never been disturbed with any discussions as to the person of Christ. The doctrine of his proper Godhead has been universally received, and the census of the Province scarcely exhibits a single avowed Unitarian. But we should be prepared. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." And that leaven has begun. James Morrison's works, giving a most earthly and sensual view of the Sonship of Christ, are most industriously circulated among us. In these instead of being described as the Eternal Son of God, it is taught that he "became the Son of God when he was begotten in the womb of the Virgin Mary"—that he is the Son of God because "God only was his father," and "the Son of Man because he had Mary for his mother."

Now it is admitted that some otherwise sound divines have denied the Eternal Sonship of Christ but their view has generally been that he was called the Son of God, in consequence of his official character, and they have regarded the title as equivalent to the Messiah. But we have never heard anything so gross as that he was the Son of God by being begotten in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Such a view must ultimately lead to the denial of his divinity altogether. Even as maintained by those Divines to whom we have referred, we regard the denial of the Eternal Sonship of Christ as a dangerous doctrine, and contrary to scripture, which represents him as taking the title in a sense which implied equality with the Father—which represents him *as Son* entitled to the same honor, possessing the same authority, and performing the same works as the Father*—which represents the Eternal *logos* or word as the only begotten of the Father†—which contrasts his Sonship with his humanity—and which in the names of the Trinity reckons the Son as second in order with the Father.‡ But in the gross form in which it is exhibited by Morrison it must lead to a denial of the divinity of Christ altogether. It may be a mere pedantic attempt at displaying superior learning which prefers using a difficult word in place of a plain one, and a Latin word for an English one, that leads Morrison to speak of "three subsistents" in the Godhead, instead of three persons, but we confess that to us it sounds suspicious. Experience shows that such tampering with the received phraseology of the church is dangerous, and it will not surprise us if we should see his followers in their great zeal for freedom and their eagerness to cast off the trammels of creeds and confessions, abandon the doctrine of the Trinity altogether.

Indeed within the last few months there has been published in this town a catechism, which contains in reality a denial of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. The following are its statements.

* John v. 17, et seq. John x. 30—39.

† John i. 14.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.

"What is the Lord *as to his body* called ?

The Son of God.

What is the *divine life* called to which his body is united ?

It is called the Father.

What name is given to the life, wisdom and power that proceeds from the Lord ?

The Holy Spirit.

Are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit one God.

They are one God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we have published in our midst and by an individual belonging to a body which styles itself "Evangelical Union," views which are entirely subversive of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. And yet with that peculiar art, which Satan manifests in the present day of "transforming himself into an angel of light," and of teaching the grossest errors under the language of orthodoxy, we have an attempt to maintain a Trinity, a three one, but not three persons in one Godhead, as held by the universal church, but three "subsistents" to use Morrison's phrase, in the one person of Jesus Christ—the Father denoting, as it is said, the divine life to which his body is united, the Son denoting his body, and the Spirit denoting merely the influence that proceeds from him. Here is the "deceivableness of unrighteousness" so characteristic of all assaults upon the truth in the present day.

III. But in the third place I would remark that we are in the present day called on to maintain *the doctrines of sovereign grace against some peculiar modes either of denying them or of neutralizing them.*

There have been times in the history of the church, when these were proclaimed in such a manner as to cause other important truths to be neglected, and thus to induce an Antinomian abuse of them. The doctrine of the free grace of God in the salvation of man has been so exclusively exhibited, that the necessity of practical godliness has been overlooked—man's inability for spiritual good, and his entire dependence on the spirit, have been insisted on in such a manner, that the equally true doctrines of man's free agency and human responsibility have been kept out of sight, or so feebly pressed, that sinners rested in carnal security—as if they were not only helpless but blameless—the sovereignty of God has been so exhibited as to conceal the freeness of the gospel offer and the sinner's warrant to accept the Saviour.

But assuredly this is not the characteristic of the present day. The material progress which man is making—his advancement in the arts and sciences, and the improvements making in social life, have induced a boastfulness of spirit, which has been extended to moral and religious subjects. And hence in the present day those views which exalt man and tend to give him honor and credit in his own salvation are prominent and public, while Calvinism which lays man prostrate at the feet of his Creator is often regarded as distanced by the progress of the age.

It is not, however, so much against the open denial of the doctrines of grace, that we have to contend, as the spirit so prevalent of keeping out of sight the sterner features of the system—to clip off what we regard as its rugged corners, and plane down its roughness, that it may pass smoothly through the world. There is a disposition prevalent in the church, to insist on what is general, and to confine attention to the principles that are considered common to all evangelical bodies.

But more than this there has been a strong disposition to modify the system—to seek some middle ground—to explain its doctrines according to some prevailing theory of the human mind, and thus to harmonize them with human philosophy. These attempts have been closely connected, and though their efforts have been widely spread, and though the forms of doctrine in which they have issued have been multifarious, yet they are all more or less connected with the New School Theology of the United States. In some instances they have originated in an attempt to amend the nomenclature of Theology—to exchange what is considered the scholastic form of a past age for a more scientific terminology suited to the present day. In this way some good men have lent their names to speculations which have ended in the grossest forms of Pelagianism. This is the real character of what is there called Finneyism, from the Rev C. G. Finney, and sometimes “Oberlin doctrines” from his having founded his theological school at Oberlin.* He has been followed implicitly by Morrison in Scotland, with the exception that the latter has not decidedly adopted the views of the former regarding perfection, and hence in Scotland the system has usually borne the name of Morrisonianism.

We are not, however, to regard the New School Presbyterians, or the advocates of what is called New England Theology as opposed to Calvinism. This is supposed to be the case, but it is not correct. The adherents of the latter system speak of it as “Calvinism in an improved form.” “It is,” said one of its leading advocates, “not mere Calvinism, but it is consistent Calvinism. It is a revised and corrected edition of the Genevan creed.”† They in general agree with Calvinists in holding the doctrines of the divine decrees, election, and the Perseverance of the Saints. But they differ from the “Old Calvinists” in denying the doctrine of human inability, making man’s responsibility commensurate with his ability, also in denying the doctrine of the imputation either of Adam’s sin or of Christ’s righteousness, and of any covenant relations between Adam and his posterity, or Christ and his people, and of a definite efficacious atonement. On these and kindred topics they have adopted certain speculations founded principally on certain philosophical theories of the human mind, which have led to every variety of error.

An extreme section represented by Finney in America and Morrison in Scotland have adopted a system of the grossest Pelagianism, not only denying the doctrines of the divine decrees and Election, but also adopting the views advocated by Pelagius in the fifth century regarding man’s moral nature, regeneration and the work of the Spirit. From the peculiar and insidious form, in which their views on these last points are presented, we feel it due to notice them more particularly.

In reference to the natural state of man, they deny any corrupt nature descending from Adam to his posterity. They represent sin as consisting in acts of transgression, committed by those who have come to years to have a knowledge of the law, and holiness in acts of obedience. They regard the idea of a sinful nature as absurd. They represent Adam at his creation as being neither sinful nor holy, but as acquiring a holy character by holy acts—that our Saviour when he was born was only holy in the

* From the Oberlin School come several if not most of the Morrisonian ministers in British America.

† Professor Park of Andover.

sense in which inanimate objects are sometimes represented in Scripture viz., as devoted to God—that infants at birth have no moral character—and some would say not even a moral nature, a statement which reduces them to a level with the brutes. They represent infants as born with the same nature as Adam, but in more unfavorable circumstances, in consequence of the prevalence of sin around them in the world. And yet they will talk of the depravity of man which they take care to define as denoting not any tendency to sin, but voluntary transgression after persons have come to years to know the law of God, and some even profess to believe in original sin, of course understanding it in their own sense.

It will be seen at once that these are the views of Pelagius revived, and they are now given almost in his own words. The only difference is that the old Pelagians were honest, and did not profess the doctrine of human depravity, and then explain the words to mean something else. We need scarcely say how opposed to the Bible they are. In it we everywhere find holiness affirmed of the heart. We read of a broken heart, a clean heart, an evil heart. It traces our evil actions to their seat in the heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c. It tells us that we are "conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity," certainly implying a sinful nature. It represents us as by nature "the children of wrath," and if we are subjects of wrath, by nature, surely we must be sinful by nature. It represents man as created originally "in the image of God," which is elsewhere defined as consisting in knowledge and holiness, but that after he became sinful, that his child was born in that image. It proclaims the great principle that "all that is born of the flesh is flesh," and utters the challenge, "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean."

We might also remark that this system is as unphilosophical and opposed to common sense as it is unscriptural. Did we see a tree, which in every variety of circumstances always produced evil fruit or the reverse—that amid the heat of Tropics or the cold of an arctic region—that in whatever position, whether on the storm-beaten mountain or the shaded valley—that in every variety of soil—in the sandy desert or the well watered plain—that under every variety of cultivation, whether in the elegant parterre or exposed in the open wilderness, always and everywhere produced a bitter fruit, would we not consider it an utter absurdity to say that only the fruit of the tree was evil, and that there was nothing in the *nature* of the tree causing it to produce fruit of that kind. And this is the example which our Saviour adduces to illustrate that our sinful acts proceed from an evil nature. "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

We might press the inquiry, how do men universally sin as soon as they become capable of moral action. To this we receive the old Pelagian answer, that it is by the contagious example of those around us. But how comes it that men universally set such a bad example—and how comes it that the child sins in spite of the best example. There is in fact the same evidence that we have an evil moral nature as there is that we are rational creatures. But Morrison, who in the lowest depths of American Theology seems always to find some lower depth, gives another explanation. He represents the sinfulness of man as owing to a depraved bodily constitution resulting from the fall. This mortality, he says, (that is the universal mortality in consequence of Adam's sin) must be the result of a *physical* depravation, or a corruption of "the flesh," and this corrupted "flesh" is evidently one of the two great channels in which *moral depravity* runs

to us from Adam." We must here note again the Satanic art, by which the language of Orthodoxy is used to denote ideas the very opposite. Here is talk of "corruption of the flesh" and a depraved constitution which, however, only denotes a diseased body, and even moral depravity which, however, is explained as denoting actual transgression.

But taking the view as it stands, we thought that we had at length found something new in the way of heresy, but really it is so transcendantly absurd, that we scarcely know how to treat it otherwise than with ridicule.

But the subject is too serious for ridicule. As the friends of truth, we are called to take a determined stand against such a system of low and debasing materialism—a doctrine akin to the old Heathen doctrine of the malignity of matter—a doctrine which destroys the very foundation of all moral obligation, by referring man's conduct, not to a responsible will, but to his physical organization, at the same time that we cannot but feel pity for those who have allowed themselves to be misled by such blind guides, and with scarcely pity for those guides who afford so impressive an exhibition of the apostle's language, "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools."

But this view of depravity leads to a new theory in regard to regeneration. This is admitted by themselves. They acknowledge no *radical change of nature*. It is merely as Finney expresses it, "a change of the governing purpose of the soul," or as others define it, "of the balance of the susceptibilities," and hence the idea of instantaneous regeneration is scouted by some of them, and it is maintained that it is gradually effected, and in the catechism already referred to, it is asserted that a man is born again by a life in accordance with God's Word. In other words he performs the actions of life before he is born, and becomes born by continuing to do so. Surely absurdity like this needs no refutation. But how imperfect the whole view of regeneration compared with the Scripture account of the matter—as communicating new life to them that were dead—a being born again—a taking the heart of stone out of our flesh and giving a new heart, having a divine seed implanted in the heart, and being created new, so that, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and all things become new."

But the point particularly requiring attention is the agency to which all this is attributed. It is boldly asserted by Finney that this a man can do himself. "As God requires men to make themselves a new heart, it is the strongest possible evidence that they are able to do it. If the sinner ever has a new heart he must obey the command of the text, and *make it himself*. Sinner, instead of waiting and praying for God to change your heart, you should at once summon up your powers, put forth the effort, and change the governing purposes of your mind. The sinner that minds the flesh can change his mind, and mind God." Thus "the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots."

This is plain enough, but such an entire denial of the work of the Spirit goes too plainly in the face of the Bible, to go down with any portion of the christian public, and accordingly there must be some appearance of acknowledging the hand of God in the work, but they reduce it all to the influence of moral suasion—such as one man exercises over another. "The power which God exerts in the conversion of a soul is *moral* power; it is that kind of power by which a statesman sways the mind of a senate; or by which an advocate moves and bows the heart of a jury." And again he says, in speaking of this change, "It is perfectly proper to say that the Spi-

rit turned him, just as you would say of a man who had persuaded another to change his mind on the subject of politics, that he had converted him and brought him over." According to this all that the Spirit does is to present truth powerfully before the mind, like an advocate arguing a cause before a jury; or as one man influences and persuades another in the common affairs of life, though with greater skill than can be employed by any human agent. Similar to this is the language of Morrison. In reply to the question, "What more does the Holy Spirit do, besides recording the truth about the propitiation of Jesus, in order to bring sinners to have faith in it?"

"The Holy Spirit, by a holy and wise Providence, preserves the Bible, and spreads it abroad in the world; and he raises up men of God, whom he qualifies to declare and explain the truths contained in it; and by multitudes of ways, many of which may not be known to us, he overrules, *as far as he wisely can*, the circumstances of all men's lots, so as to bring the truth home upon their conscience, and so as to leave them without excuse, if they continue without faith in it."

Now this system entirely makes void the dispensation of the Spirit. It indeed professes to hold it in name, speaking of the influence of the Spirit in the word, but it denies all that is commonly understood by it. It recognizes no *direct* action of the Spirit upon the *heart* of man. Indeed, from its denial of a depraved nature, no such thing is needed. All that the Spirit does is to present the word to men, and by means in Providence render it more impressive. As Jenkyn illustrates the idea, at the revival of philosophy much was effected by the works of Aristotle, and, as he was the author of these, their influence may be said to be the influence of Aristotle, so we may speak of the influence which the word produces upon men as the influence of the Spirit, as he was the author of the word, and in Providence adopts means to impress it upon men. We need scarcely say how contrary these are to the representations of the word of God. There, when a new heart is given to us it is because God has put his Spirit *within us*. There, when the multitudes were converted on the day of Pentecost, it was not the force of Peter's arguments that effected the change, but the Holy Ghost fell upon them that heard. There, when Lydia attended to the things spoken by Paul, it was because the Lord opened her heart. It indeed represents the word as the means, but in itself it has no power.—The gospel must come not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. Even when preached with the clearness of Paul and enforced with the eloquence of Apollos, all is vain. The prophet may prophesy to the dry bones in the valley of vision but there shall be no breath in them.—The same is evident from the descriptions given of the nature of the work as a rising from the dead, &c., as well as from those passages which represent the Spirit as dwelling in believers, and its consequent effects as "the love of God shed abroad *in our hearts* by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

But we need not multiply proofs. Sufficient has been said to show that we have here under the most insidious form, in the words of orthodoxy, and under the guise of half-truths, a denial of the great doctrines of sovereign grace in the salvation of the sinner. Will my fathers and brethren permit me to say that there is a loud call upon us to make ourselves familiar not merely with these errors as they have been presented in former times, but in the specious disguises which they assume in the present day, for we feel fully assured that the doctrines thus assailed form an important part of "the present truth."

IV. But fourthly, the present is an age in which the Roman Catholic controversy is revived.

"I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the False Prophet. For they are the spirits of Devils working miracles, which go forth unto the Kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."* The best expounders of prophecy refer this prediction to our own era, and when we look abroad upon the world we see every reason to believe the correctness of the application. Everywhere we see Rome putting forth extraordinary efforts, and that in her twofold form of the beast and the false prophet. Taking the beast to denote the Pope as the head of the ten kingdoms of Europe and of the Church of Rome as a politico-ecclesiastical system, we behold desperate efforts made to re-establish her influence over the Governments of the world. Concordats have been entered into not only with Austria, but with some of the minor Powers of Europe, by which in their civil administration, they are placed entirely at the disposal of the Church of Rome, and the power which she wielded in the dark ages is again in a large measure restored to her.—The same thing has been either attempted or actually accomplished in Mexico and South America. We do not say that in these countries the influence of Popery over the mass of the population is increased. On the contrary, we believe that nothing is more certain than that it is dying out, and nowhere more thoroughly than in the very Roman States themselves. But such is the effort which, according to divine prediction, she is making to regain her lost ascendancy over the Governments of the earth.

But she is here represented as going forth to the Kings of the *whole world*. In those countries of Europe which retain representative institutions, she is making a desperate effort, through the influence of her priests over the people, to decide the elections and thus control the Government. The ruler of France, whatever his own inclinations, is at the mercy of the Jesuits. And what is more sad, Holland, once the home of freedom, the refuge of the oppressed, and great through her Protestantism and her Bible, has so far yielded to intrigue, that from the 1st January, 1858, the Bible and everything distinctive of her Protestantism has been banished from her schools. In England and the United States, and in almost every British Colony, the efforts of the Papacy are directed to securing political power and rendering the civil government subservient to the advancement of her influence. This she commonly manages by holding the balance of power between those parties which are apt to arise in free states. In her missionary operations she relies much upon the civil power, in some instances, as in Tahiti, employing the power of a Papal Government for the establishment of her influence, in others using intrigues with the native Governments for the same end.

This is a very important phase of Popery in the present day. We have indeed some men among us, who proclaim themselves good Protestants, who think we should only oppose the errors in doctrine of Rome, and leave her to rule our political and social affairs as she pleases. We beg humbly to tell such, that they are very imperfectly acquainted with the system either as exhibited on the page of history or as delineated in the Bible. There it is exhibited as a beast—a tyrannical political power—having seven heads and ten horns. It is in this character that it makes war upon the saints. The Church of Rome is represented as an harlot, the emblem of a false Church,

* Rev. xvi. 13, 14.

but in her power and progress through the world, she is represented as riding upon the beast, or through her possession of political power. The Kings of the earth are represented as giving their power and strength unto the beast, until the times be fulfilled, and the beast and the false prophet are alike to be destroyed. "They both were cast alive into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone."*

We must also here notice as a peculiar feature of the Papal system in the present day, the immense development of Ultramontaniam. The whole power of the Church centres more than ever in Rome. The Churches of France, Germany and Spain were formerly national Churches, enjoying certain rights and a certain measure of self-government. The Gallican liberties, as they were called, were long zealously maintained by the Church of France. But all this has passed away. The influence of the various Churches and their Bishops is every day becoming less, all power and authority centres in the Chair of Peter, and the Romish Pontiff is more than ever absolute master, or rather the Jesuits through him wield the entire influence of the Church.

But the passage already quoted indicates that there should be an extension of the teaching of the errors of Rome. "The unclean spirits come out of the mouth of the *False Prophet*." And have we not abundant indications of this, wherever we turn our eyes? The missions of the Propaganda extend throughout the whole world. Their agents cross the path of the Protestant missionary wherever he goes, be it to the interior of China, or, as in the case of our own missionaries, among the most savage tribes of the Pacific. To use the language of another, "They are to be found among the Islanders of the South Seas, and the Nomads of Tartary—traversing the vast forests of North America and the pampas of the South—laboring amid the pestilential jungles of Java and the breezy table lands of the Himalayas—the fever-stricken swamps of Senegal and the frost-bound shores of Labrador—the arid plains of Sennar and the teeming delta of the Niger. They are to be found wherever perils are to be encountered for the glory of the Church, or souls to be gathered to her fold. Facing a fiery persecution in Corea and Siam, hunted like wild beasts from the mountains of Thibet, and exploring with unflinching courage the solitudes through which flows the sounding Brahmapootra, confronting starvation among the Alleghanies and shipwreck on the coast of Madagascar, these men exhibit in their singular career every variety of moving peril and romantic incident, and all united with a perseverance, that admits nothing to be impossible, and a devotedness that would ennoble any cause."†

At home every county in Ireland and every populous town in England has its Papal missionaries. In 1829 the Propaganda expended nothing on missions in England, but in one year lately they spent the sum of £40,000. In our own Province we cannot but have observed lately a great increase of activity in building chapels, training priests, and other means for advancing the interests of the Church.

And farther, the system of Tractarianism or Puseyism, both in the United States and England, has been the means of a vast increase of the teaching of Popish doctrines, and has led a large number of the aristocracy and clergy of the Church of England into the bosom of the Romish Church.

We do not say that with all this activity Popery is really making progress

* Rev. xiii. 1-5, xvii. 8, &c.

† United Presbyterian Magazine.

in the world. On the contrary, we believe that she is daily losing ground. This is remarkably the case in Papal countries. The efforts of their missionaries in Heathen countries effect little more than a nominal change.— Amid the free institutions and general education of America, notwithstanding the vast tide of Roman Catholic immigration, the highest authorities admit that her losses are such, that she does not increase with the progress of population. And we believe that with all her activity in England, her progress is owing to immigration and not to any real change in the minds of the people. Puseyism is not the religion of the English people. In fact, the spirit of the age is against formalism, and it is this fact that is nerving Rome to such desperate efforts.

And in these efforts no engine that will answer her purpose is left unemployed. There were three agencies, which may almost be said to have been brought into existence by the Reformation—the pulpit, the press, and the common school. When the Reformation commenced, there could scarcely be said to have been anything like public preaching. The printing press was only discovered about that time and remained unproductive, until the literary activity of the Reformation gave it employment. And to the same great revolution we owe our common schools. John Knox was the founder of Scotland's parish schools, and this was only a sample of what took place wherever the Reformation was successful. These agencies were long in the hands of Protestantism, while Rome endeavoured to maintain her cause by means of the Inquisition. But that instrument is unsuited to the age, and she has learned to use the machinery of the Reformation. The pulpit has been again re-occupied. On the Continent, both in the large towns and country villages, there has been a great revival of preaching since 1848. The Jesuits have not a few who cultivate pulpit oratory, and some of them with decided success.

Popery is also working the press with no small vigor. It has produced several volumes with a considerable air of letters and philosophy for the better informed, but she has a popular literature filled with imposture and absurdities, letters written by Jesus Christ, discourses written by the Virgin Mary, and she has even adopted the Reformed plan of circulating it by col-porteurs. Another feature of her movements almost peculiar to the present day has been Journalism. In leading towns she maintains periodicals conducted with great ability; and a singular peculiarity of the management of them, is that in many instances, these are independent of the Bishop of the Diocese, and directly in the interest of the Central power, and thus the Pope is enabled by them to exercise a control over his clergy.

The school, too, Rome is everywhere turning to her purposes. The school she hates, and had she the power she would close every one, but not being able to do this she employs her skill in making them the instruments of advancing her own ends. If she cannot prevent the peasantry of France and Ireland from being taught to read, she labors to render their education abortive by binding their intelligence in the chains of superstition. In Roman Catholic countries she is getting the whole education under her own control. In free countries, where she cannot do this, her efforts are directed to obtaining schools of her own, supported from the public funds, or at least to thrust the Bible from those established by law. She has her Nunnery Schools for teaching female accomplishments, which serve as so many traps for romantic girls. She has even her Sabbath Schools wrought diligently for the same great end.

We do not feel it necessary to advert at much length to the doctrines of

the Church of Rome, as these are substantially the same as in every other age. But there is one point particularly worthy of attention. All who have examined closely her present position concur in the view that her religion is becoming more and more a system of Mariolatry. The Virgin Mary is becoming the one great object of all her adorations, and she seems to have filled up the measure of her apostasy by proclaiming the immaculate conception of the mother of our Lord. We have devoted our attention to the efforts which she is making to extend her principles, to show that this is likely soon to be, if it is not already, the great controversy of the age. Preparation is making in this manner for a great, and we believe the final struggle, in which great Babylon will be cast as a millstone into the depths of the sea. "They are the spirits of Devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the Kings of the earth and the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."*

V. It will be seen that all these subjects of controversy are exactly the same as those which have agitated the Church in other ages, and though they may come before us in a different form they are the same in reality.—But we have remarked at the outset that each age has commonly one distinctive subject of controversy—one doctrine which it is privileged to establish as a part of the practical faith of the Church, and it may be asked is there any such in our day. We think that there is, and with due submission we would say, that the one great principle which it seems the *mission* of the present age to establish is *the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom*, particularly as affecting its relation to the kingdoms of the earth and the world at large.

Our Lord taught that his "kingdom was not of this world." When his disciples misunderstood its nature, he instructed them by the declaration, "The kingdom of God is *within you*." Its subjects are spiritual. "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." When men desired its establishment amid the pompous decorations of earthly grandeur, he taught them that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." All its services are spiritual. "God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Its privileges are spiritual. When two of the favored disciples asked that "they might sit, the one on his right hand and the other on the left in his kingdom," he said, "Ye know not what ye ask," and he promised that their reign should be with him hereafter in glory. And, especially, it is to be maintained and advanced by spiritual means. "If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."

Now we do not say that the great truth of the Church's spiritual independence was unknown before, but we do say that it was never fully appreciated, we do say that its full bearings in application were never fully understood. Hence the Church at all former times sought to be established by the civil power, and regarded this as the greatest of earthly advantages. Yet now it is beginning to be seen as the teaching of all past history, that this necessarily tends to the secularization of the Church. It has destroyed the spiritual character of its membership, confounding the subjects of the State with the membership of the Church. It has dimmed the spiritual glory of its worship by surrounding it with the pageantry of worldly glory—"the might and mastery," as Dr Chalmers called it, of an established Church. It has connected

* Rev. xvi. 14.

civil immunities with the observance of religious ordinances ; and, especially, it has substituted for the simple spiritual means which the Church's King has appointed the carnal weapons of the civil power. Indeed, whatever be the particular regulations of an established Church, its very foundation principle is a dependence on carnal weapons for the promotion of the interests of the Church.

It has been and still is the work of the age to establish the important truth of the spiritual character of the Church and its independence of all worldly powers. This was the great principle of the Voluntary controversy. This was the principle at the foundation of the noble struggle of the Free Church, though those most deeply interested in that struggle did not understand the full bearing of the great principle for which they were contending. They had to learn (but they are now learning) the truth that the Church has as much to fear from Caesar's gold as from Caesar's sword, and the great principle that God has given her all the resources requisite for the work which she has to accomplish in the world.* Secessions have also taken place in France, Switzerland and Holland. Indeed the people of almost every christian country, at least of every one in which a civil establishment of religion exists, are more or less agitated on the subject. They may not be discussing the actual question of the separation of Church and State, but questions are constantly arising which involve that issue. This is the case in Papal countries as well as Protestant. Even in Rome, where there is any expression of public sentiment, it is in favor of the separation of the Pope's temporal and spiritual power.

The interpretation given by the best interpreters of the statement under the seventh vial, that "the cities of the nations fell," is that it denotes the downfall of civil establishments of religion, and it requires no keen observer of the signs of the times to perceive, that these institutions are nodding to their fall. In Ireland the Established Church is only upheld, in consequence of the fear, that if it were to come down, others would have to follow. In Scotland, were the continuance of the Established Church dependant upon the will of the people of that country, it would not stand a single day, while in England, though more slowly, the tendency is in the same direction. And on the Continent the indication is that many of such institutions will be overthrown by revolutionary violence.

But another source in the present day from which we have to contend with opposition to the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom, is from the Millenarian theories so prevalent. This heresy seems to arise at every period of great excitement, and considering the agitated state of society in the present day throughout the world, we are not surprised that it should have broken out with fresh vigor. It is now maintained by a large number of the clergy both of Britain and America, and advocated by many of the most popular writers of the day.

* The author regrets to hear that these sentiments have been considered offensive to his brethren of the Free Church. Nothing could be farther from his intention than to utter any thing of the kind. He has not felt it necessary to alter any thing that he has written. He may be wrong in his opinion, that the principle of the spiritual independence of the Church, for which the Free Church has been contending, must lead to the relinquishment of all dependance upon the civil power for support. He may be wrong in his belief that Free Churchmen are changing their opinion regarding the efficacy of the Voluntary principle, and the value of State support to religion. He believes that he can adduce high authority in the Free Church in support of his view. But whether right or wrong, he cannot believe that intelligent and candid members of that body will object to the free expression of his sentiments on this subject, particularly when in this very paragraph he has shown every disposition to do justice to the Free Church, in what he had there called their "noble struggle."

We are not going to discuss the Millenarian theory in full, but we wish to point attention to the fact, that it obscures, if it do not entirely destroy, the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom. According to its advocates Christ's kingdom is yet to come, and the Millennium is the period of his reign. According to their notions, the Saviour, having come before that era, will take possession of the throne of David in Jerusalem and reign there one thousand years with his risen saints over the converted Jews in their own land, and through them over the nations of the earth. They expect moreover, that when he comes, a magnificent Temple will be built upon Mount Zion, (and Bonar goes even so far as to maintain, that the whole sacrificial system of the Levitical law will be restored,) that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, enlarged and magnificently adorned, and that Christ will literally "fight with his enemies as he fought with them in the day of battle," and thus show himself the greatest warrior of the age.

It will be at once seen, that these are just the carnal notions of the Jews regarding Christ's kingdom. All the difference is as to the time of its manifestation. Millenarians admit this and say that the Jews were only mistaken in confounding, what was to take place at his second advent, with what was to take place at his first. The apostles were imbued with this notion even after our Lord's resurrection, and until the day of Pentecost, when they were endued with power from on high. That day eradicated all such notions from their minds, and Peter's first discourse is directed to show, that Jesus was then exalted to the throne of David and made "Lord and Christ," or in other words, Messiah on his throne, (Acts ii. 29-36). It is certainly amazing that christians in the light of the 19th century should return to the old notions of the Jews. There must be something gratifying to creatures of sense in this anti-spiritual system, that christians of high attainments and sincere piety should be led to adopt it. The whole history of the system in the past—the absurdities connected with it in the first three centuries—the wickedness of the Anabaptists of Munster—the tragical end of the "Celestial Republic" of John of Leyden—the extravagances of the "Fifth Monarchy men" in the days of Cromwell, should be a warning to those who, though they may disclaim all such results, yet embrace a system which has so commonly in the past led to such ruinous consequences.

In connexion with the spiritual character of the christian Church, as exhibited in the movements and discussions of the present age, may be mentioned its diffusive or aggressive character. The present is the great missionary age. Its symbol is in the words of the seer, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tongue and people."* There have been other ages in which there have been missionary operations, but none in which they have been carried on so extensively and so systematically. The present is the age in which the missionary enterprise is first regarded *as belonging essentially to the character of the Church*—when it has been shown to be her chief duty, and a principal end for which she has been instituted, to evangelize the nations. So that now any Church, that is not engaged in one way or another in extending the gospel, is regarded as neglecting an important part of her obligations. In connexion with these discussions, and particularly with the discussion of the Voluntary principle, the duty of contributing to the support and extension of ordinances, has received greater prominence than before, so that the present day is characterized by a liberality for reli-

* Rev. xiv. 6.

gious objects, such as has never been exhibited in any former age. It was only at the close of the last century that the great modern missionary movement may be said to have commenced, and yet now there is scarcely a portion of the world that has not been refreshed with its influences. The missionaries of the Cross are to be found among the islands that gem the Southern Pacific, in the sultry air of Hindostan and the cinnamon groves of Ceylon, amid the ruins of Athens and the desolations of Jerusalem, in the scorched plains of Africa and the everlasting snows of Greenland, in the prairies of America and amid the streets and lanes of the crowded city, and everywhere the gospel is found the power of God unto salvation, until we begin to anticipate the era

When Christ shall have dominion
O'er river, sea and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar.

But the progress of the Church is still onward. Its goal in this age is its starting point in the next. Its present attainments form but the stage from which it takes a higher ascent. "Forgetting those things that are behind she reaches forth unto those things that are before." What then is to be her next step. It is always hazardous to attempt to predict the future, yet from the examination of causes now in operation we may be able to form some general idea of what may be the distinguishing feature of the next age, and we would express our belief, judging from the preparatory work going on, that the visible union of Christ's followers will be a distinguishing feature of the coming era. For this we see in the present day abundance of preparation—we see the subject discussed by the press and from the pulpit—we see the co-operation of christians of various denominations in great schemes of benevolence—we see the formation of the Evangelical Alliance and other institutions, especially with the view of giving practical exhibition of the real union between them—we have seen the actual incorporation of bodies nearly allied, and attempts to form other unions of the same kind—we see a tendency to cherish brotherly feeling among those, whose differences are such as to prevent incorporation, and in this way misunderstandings are removed, and evangelical christians find that in heart they agree more nearly than they had supposed; and above all the strength and imposing attitude of the common foes, gathering their strength and combining their efforts, have shown the necessity of greater combination among the friends of Protestant truth.

All this however is only preparation. The ideas men form on the subject are generally crude, and some of the theories adopted involve the most unscriptural latitudinarianism. And it would appear as if God were saying to this generation, as he said to David, *Ye shall not build the goodly temple of concord, for ye have been men of war, but thy sons that shall come after thee shall build the temple.* These movements however, like the contributions of David, serve to prepare the way for that era, when Zion's "watchmen shall see eye to eye and the Lord bring again Zion," and our Saviour's prayer be answered, that his disciples "may be all one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

More combination will be needed for that fearful conflict that is evidently approaching. Every student of prophecy—and every observer of the signs of the times, whatever be the point of view from which he looks upon the future, is anticipating a struggle political and religious. Whether it will be the final struggle, preparatory to the ushering in of the Millennial glory of the Church, we would not positively decide; but in our view, circumstances in

Providence, as well as God's word, indicate that it will be. There only remain to be fulfilled the fall of Rome and the Northern Hailstorm. The Papal King is now tottering upon his throne. His head hangs from side to side and he must be propped up with pillows to retain the sceptre in his grasp, while the unclean spirits like frogs are gathering the Kings of the earth to battle to that great day of God Almighty, and "he gathered them together in a place which is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."—And the Hailstorm seems ready to burst upon the devoted nations. The great contest between despotism and democracy, between superstition and infidelity, is near at hand. Already we see the impending hosts mustering to the battle—"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." We may almost hear the summons of the Almighty "to the feathered fowl and to the beast of the field to assemble that they may eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth." A time of universal retribution seems approaching, when the wine cup of God's fury shall pass from kingdom to kingdom and from nation to nation, and already "men's hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth."

But if there is reason for gloom, there is also reason for hope. Even should the skies grow darker around us, the christian has no reason to be disheartened. Among the shaking of the nations, the things that cannot be shaken will remain, and he is the subject of a kingdom that cannot be moved. Though the storm gathers round the vessel, and the sea and the waves roar, yet in the fourth watch of the night, when the darkness is deepest and the billows are highest, the great Lord will appear walking upon the waves, and received with joy by his disciples, the wind will cease and there shall be a great calm.

Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world, and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of things
Is merely as the working of the sea
Before a calm that rocks itself to rest.

What, then, though the years coming should travail in the pangs of a new birth and "have sorrow because her hour is come," in a little she will no more remember her sorrow, for joy that a new age is born unto the world. "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness." These judgments are simultaneous with the dawning of the Millennial glory of the Church. No sooner did the seer hear the voice of much people in heaven, saying "Alleluia, salvation, glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are thy judgments, for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand," than he hears also as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Happy they who are watching for the dawning of that day, and whose hearts are prepared by the Spirit of God for its blissful changes.

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